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APM-STEALTH-LEAKS:250

PENTAGON TRYING TO TRACK DOWN "STEALTH" LEAKS

WASHINGTON (AP) - A DEFENSE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL SAYS THE PENTAGON IS TRYING TO TRACK DOWN "LEAKS" OF INFORMATION ABOUT ITS REVOLUTIONARY TECHNOLOGY DESIGNED TO KEEP FOREIGN ENEMIES FROM DETECTING U.S. BOMBERS OR MISSILES.

IN A PREPARED STATEMENT RELEASED THURSDAY, PENTAGON RESEARCH CHIEF WILLIAM PERRY ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED HE GAVE INFORMATION ON THE "STEALTH" PROJECT TO BENJAMIN SCHEMMER, EDITOR OF THE ARMED FORCES JOURNAL.

HOWEVER, PERRY SAID HE GAVE SCHEMMER THE INFORMATION ONLY BECAUSE OTHER LEAKS TO NEWS MEDIA HAD LED DEFENSE SECRETARY HAROLD BROWN TO DECIDE TO PUBLICLY CONFIRM THE TECHNOLOGY, WHICH HE DID LAST WEEK. PERRY DID NOT DIRECTLY COMMENT ON SCHEMMER'S ASSERTION TO A HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THURSDAY THAT THE INFORMATION WAS GIVEN TO HIM AS "A DIRECTED LEAK FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES" IN AN ELECTION YEAR. HOWEVER, BROWN HAS DENIED SPECULATION THAT HE PUBLICIZED THE PROGRAM TO COUNTER ALLEGATIONS THAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAS ALLOWED NATIONAL DEFENSE TO STAGNATE.

PERRY SAID HE CALLED SCHEMMER IN TO SEE HIM ON AUG. 18 AND OFFERED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS, WITHIN SECURITY GUIDELINES, BECAUSE SCHEMMER HAD HAD THE GIST OF THE STORY FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS BUT HAD AGREED TO WITHHOLD PUBLICATION AS LONG AS THE STORY WAS NOT PUBLISHED ELSEWHERE.

THE PENTAGON RESEARCH CHIEF SAID HE FELT IT WAS ONLY FAIR TO GIVE THE EDITOR A CHANCE TO PRINT HIS STORY AHEAD OF BROWN'S NEWS CONFERENCE ACKNOWLEDGING THE TECHNOLOGICAL BREAKTHROUGH.

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"THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE DELAYED ANY INVESTIGATION OF THE EARLIER LEAKS IN THE BEGINNING IN HOPES THAT THIS VERY SENSITIVE PROGRAM WOULD NOT BE FURTHER HIGHLIGHTED EITHER TO THE PRESS OR TO POTENTIAL ADVERSARIES," PERRY SAID.

"AFTER THE AUG. 22 PRESS CONFERENCE WHICH ADMITTED THE EXISTENCE OF THIS TECHNOLOGY, IT WAS NO LONGER NECESSARY TO DELAY A FORMAL INVESTIGATION," HE SAID, AND HE ADDED THAT THE PENTAGON HAS ASKED THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT AND ITS OWN AGENTS TO LOOK INTO SUCH LEAKS.

IN ADDITION TO SEVERAL NEWS ACCOUNTS TOUCHING ON THE PROGRAM, KEY ELEMENTS OF THE STERLTH PROJECT WERE DISCUSSED LAST JAN. 31 IN AN OFFICIALLY APPROVED SPEECH BY LT. GEN. KELLY H. BURKE, AIR FORCE DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR RESEARCH, BEFORE AN AERONAUTICS CONFERENCE IN MONTEREY, CALIF.

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